

TO NICOCLES.

NICOCLES was the younger son of Evagoras, King of Salamis in Cyprus; he succeeded his father in B.C. 374. Others place the death of the latter earlier, and the reign of Nicocles B.C. 380-360. Like his father, he was a just and upright monarch, who treated his subjects well. His character, however, was less warlike; he occupied himself much with philosophical studies, and was influential in spreading Hellenic culture, not only in Cyprus, but also in neighbouring countries. His court was frequented by well-known "Sophists." It is probable that he visited Athens, where he stayed some time, and attended the lectures of Isocrates; we have it on the authority of the latter himself that he received valuable presents from Nicocles, although it is doubtful whether his honorarium for the "Nicocles" was as large as is stated—twenty talents. The letter was addressed to the king soon after his accession to the throne. Those who place this event in B.C. 380 assign it to about B.C. 376. If it is assumed that his father did not die until B.C. 374, it must be put somewhat later.

Like the "Demonicus," this is one of the "paraenetic" or "hortatory" addresses, which are classed as a division of the "symbouleutic" or "deliberative" speeches.

It is a letter of general advice to Nicocles, setting forth the duties of a monarch towards his subjects. In the introduction Isocrates points out that kings suffer from the want of teaching and instruction, of which they specially stand in need, and concludes by reproaching the people for always being anxious for something "new," and for neglecting what is profitable.

The treatise has been attributed to Isocrates of Apollonia, but the mention of it in the "Nicocles" (Or. iii. § 11) and the "Antidosis" (Or. xv. §§ 69-72), in which portions of it are introduced piecemeal, is a convincing argument against this assumption.

TO NICOCLES.

1. WHEN men are in the habit, Nicocles, of bringing to you kings garments or brass or wrought gold or other valuable things of the kind, of which they themselves have poor store but you have abundance, it is too clearly manifest to me that they are not making a present but are carrying out a commercial transaction, and that they sell their wares much more artfully than those who avowedly carry on trade. 2. Now, I thought that it would be the noblest and most profitable gift and one most becoming me to give and you to receive, if I were able to define what habits of life you should strive after and what [practices] you should abstain from, so as best to order both your state and your royal office. Private men have many things to educate them, especially the want of luxury, and the necessity of daily taking thought for their livelihood; 3. next, the laws under which they happen in each case to be living, and further, freedom of speech and the power for friends to rebuke each other and for enemies to attack each other's faults without concealment; and besides these things, some of the poets also who have lived before us have left behind precepts showing how men ought to live; so that owing to all these influences it is likely that they will become better men. 4. But princes have no advantage of this kind, but those who ought to have received more education than others, when once they have been established in power, live all their life unadmonished; for the mass of men do not come into close contact with them, and

those who associate with them converse to please. Indeed, being masters of most abundant wealth and the highest power, by failing to make good use of these advantages they have caused many to doubt which life is more worthy of choice—that of those who hold a private station but act righteously, or that of princes. 5. For, when they look merely at their honours, riches, and power, all deem those who are in the position of monarchs to be equal to the gods; but, when they lay to heart their fears and perils, and when, in their examination of them, they see some slain by the last hands that should have done the deed, and others compelled to sin against their nearest and dearest, and others encountered by both these troubles, they think, on the contrary, that any sort of life is more profitable than to reign over all Asia amid such calamities. 6. The cause of this inconsistency and confusion of feeling is that they consider that the office of a king, like that of a priest, can be discharged by any man, whereas of all human responsibilities it is the greatest, and requires the greatest forethought. Now, in each individual action, to give counsel as to the best means of pursuing a right course and of preserving blessings while escaping from calamities, is the duty of those who are constantly with you; but as regards your general line of conduct, what you should aim at and to what you should devote yourself, I will endeavour to set forth. 7. Whether, indeed, my present when completed will be worthy of the design, it is difficult to see at a glance from the outset; for many works both in verse and prose, which, while yet in the minds of their composers, have afforded great expectations, when finished and shown to others, have earned a reputation falling far short of what was hoped of them. 8. Not that the attempt is not laudable, to seek out a neglected field and admonish the kingly office. For those who educate private men benefit them alone, but if a man should exhort to virtue those who rule the multitude, he will profit both classes, those

who possess power and those who are under them ; for the former he will make their authority surer, and for the latter he will make their government milder.

9. First, then, we must inquire what is the function of those who reign ; for, if we properly grasp the scope of the subject as a whole in its main outline, by keeping that before us, we shall be the better able to speak of the several parts. Now I think that all will agree that it is their duty to relieve their state from misfortune, to keep it safe in prosperity, and to turn it from a small state into a great one ; for it is for these objects that all other duties that arise day by day must be performed. 10. And certainly this at any rate is clear, that those who are likely to be able to do this and who take counsel on matters of such moment must not be lax or negligent, but must consider how to become more intelligent than other men. For it has been demonstrated that their kingdoms will be such as they have made their understandings ; 11. so that no athlete is so bound to exercise his body as kings are to cultivate their minds. For all the public festivals in the world do not furnish any fraction of the prizes for which you contest every day. Bearing this in mind, you must direct your efforts to surpassing others in virtue as much as you excel them in honour.

12. Now do not think that diligence, while useful in other matters, has no power of helping us to become better and wiser men ; and do not condemn us men to the great misfortune of having, in dealing with wild animals, discovered devices by which we tame their spirits and make them of better worth, and yet of not being able to assist ourselves to virtue, but, on the contrary, be convinced that education and diligence have the greatest power to better our nature ; 13. associate with the wisest of those about you, and send for any other wise men that you can ; consider that you ought not to be unacquainted with any one of the famous poets or sophists, but become a hearer of the former and a disciple of the latter, and constitute yourself a critic of

those inferior to you and a competitor with those superior; for it is by means of such exercises that you will most speedily become such a one as we have laid down he must be who is to reign rightly and to manage his state as he ought. 14. And you would best be able to stimulate yourself to the task, if you were to deem it an enormity that the worse should rule over the better and the foolish command the wise; for the more vigorously you despise the want of sense in others, the more you will cultivate your own good understanding.

15. This, then, must be the starting-point for those who intend to perform any part of their duties, and, in addition to this, one must be a lover of mankind and a lover of the state; for it is impossible to govern well either horses or dogs or men or anything else, unless a man delight in that to which he has to devote his attention. Make the interests of the people your care, and esteem it of the utmost importance to govern in a manner acceptable to them, 16. knowing that, whether they be oligarchies or other forms of government, those last the longest which best win the hearts of the masses. You will be a good popular leader if you neither permit the multitude to commit outrages nor allow them to suffer them, but contrive that, while the best men take the honours, the rest shall suffer no wrong; for these are the first and chief elements of a good constitution. 17. Of ordinances and customs break up and alter such as are not of a good character, and, if possible, be an inventor of the best institutions, or if you cannot do that, imitate what is excellent in other countries. Seek for laws which are as a whole just and expedient and consistent with each other, and which, besides this, cause as few disputes as possible and make the means of settling them as speedy as possible for the members of the state; for all these qualities ought to belong to well-constituted laws. 18. Make industries profitable for them, but lawsuits costly, that they may avoid the latter and take more eagerly to the

former. See that your decisions on mutual disputes are neither partial nor contradictory, but always give the same judgment in the same case ; for it is both right and expedient that the judgment of kings should be immutable on questions of justice, like well-constituted laws. 19. Manage the state just as you would your family property, exhibiting in your establishments a splendour befitting a king, and yet observing economy in money matters, that you may at once win glory and keep within your means. Display magnificence, not in any of those great outlays which disappear in a moment, but in the beauty of your belongings and in the bounties you bestow upon your friends, as well as in what I have mentioned before ; for expenditure of this kind will still remain your own, while at the same time you will leave to those who come after you things of more value than the expense you have incurred. 20. In religious matters do as your ancestors have taught, and consider that the richest sacrifice and the highest service is to render yourself as good and just as you can ; for there is more hope that such men will win some blessing from the gods than those who offer numbers of victims.

Honour your most intimate [friends] in the matter of public appointments, but in deed and in truth those who are best disposed towards you. 21. Consider your surest body-guard to be the virtue of your friends, the goodwill of the citizens, and your own wisdom ; for it is by these means that sovereignties are best obtained and preserved.

Devote attention to the private homes of your citizens, and remember that those who are extravagant are spending from *your* treasures, and that those who are industrious are increasing *your* resources ; for all the private property of those who dwell in the state belongs to those sovereigns who reign well. 22. Through all your life show that you reverence truth so deeply that your word is more to be trusted than other men's oaths.

Make your state safe for all foreigners and observant of engagements, and pay most respect, not to those visitors who bring gifts for you, but to those who claim to get something from you; for by honouring them you will get more credit with the world.

23. Relieve your citizens of the many fears to which they are liable, and do not desire those who do no wrong to be in dread; for as you dispose the minds of others towards you, so you too will feel towards them. Do nothing in anger, but simulate anger on a proper occasion.

Show yourself one to be feared by allowing nothing of what is going on to escape you, but lenient by making the punishment less than the offence. 24. Show your authority, not by harshness nor by severity of punishment, but by causing all to bow before your understanding and to think that you take counsel for their security better than they themselves. Be warlike as concerns knowledge of war and preparation for it, but peaceful in committing no unjust aggression. Let your intercourse with weaker states be such as you would require that of stronger states to be with you. 25. Do not be contentious about everything, but only about matters that are likely to bring you some advantage if you get the better. Consider that paltriness is shown, not by those who accept a defeat to their advantage, but by those who win a point to their own detriment.

Deem great-souled not those who undertake greater things than they can attain, but those who with noble aims are able to carry out what they take in hand.

26. Envy not those who possess the widest rule, but those who use the power they have to the best purpose, and consider that you will win perfect happiness, not if you rule the whole world amidst fears and dangers and wickedness, but if, being such as you ought to be, and acting as befits your existing position, you have moderate desires and fail in none of them. 27. Make friends, not of all who

desire it, but of those who are worthy of your character, and not of those with whom you will most agreeably spend your leisure, but of those with whose help you will best order the state. Searching should be the trials that you make of those around you, knowing that all who do not associate with you will think that you resemble those who frequent your society.

In the choice of men to be set over affairs which you do not personally transact, remember that you yourself will be held responsible for whatever they do. 28. Place confidence not in those who praise everything which you say or do, but in those who rebuke your errors. Allow freedom of speech to men of sound wisdom, that you may have friends who will help you to examine any questions on which you may be in doubt. Distinguish those who artfully flatter from those who loyally serve, that the wicked may not get the better of the good. Listen to men's conversations about each other, and try to ascertain the character both of the speakers and of those of whom they speak. 29. Punish false accusers with the same penalties as those who commit offences. Rule yourself no less than others, and consider that the most kingly quality is to be a slave to no pleasures, but to have greater command over your desires than over your fellow-citizens.

Do not rashly or thoughtlessly contract any intimacies, but accustom yourself to take pleasure in society whereby you will both be improved yourself and will appear better in the eyes of others. 30. Do not display ambition for those objects which it is possible for even bad men to achieve, but take great pride in virtue, in which the wicked have no share. Of the honours which are paid to you consider that the truest are not those publicly given under the influence of fear, but the expression in private intercourse of respect for your understanding rather than for your position. If you have occasion to show pleasure in any trivial matters, do so privately, but publicly display your

earnestness in the highest things. 31. Do not think that, while others should live in an orderly way, kings may live lawlessly, but make your temperance an example to others, remembering that the character of the whole state takes the likeness of its rulers. Let it be a sign to you that you are reigning well, if you see your subjects becoming more prosperous and more temperate through your care. 32. Consider it of more importance to leave to your children a good name than great wealth; for the one will perish, but the other is imperishable; and whereas money can be got by a good name, a good name is not to be bought by money; and while money falls to the share of bad men as well as good, a good name cannot be won except by those who excel in virtue.

Show richness in your dress and personal adornment, but stern endurance befitting a king in your other habits of life, that those who look at you may on account of your appearance think you worthy to rule, and your associates form the same judgment as the outer world on account of the vigour of your mind.

33. Keep a watch continually on your words and actions, that you may fall into as few errors as possible. The best thing is to hit the exact course which the occasion demands, but when that is difficult to discover, choose to fall short rather than to do too much; for the happy mean is to be found in qualities of defect rather than in those of excess.

34. Try to be at once polite and dignified; for the one befits the princely office, and the other is suitable for society. Now this is the hardest of all my injunctions; for you will find for the most part that those who practise dignity are cold, while those who wish to be courteous suffer loss of dignity; but you must practise both these kinds of virtue, and avoid the disadvantage which attaches to each of them.

35. Whenever you wish to master any subject which kings ought to know, pursue it both by practice and by theory; for philosophy will show you the theory, while exercising

yourself upon actual facts will make you able to deal with events.

Contemplate the chances and accidents that befall both private individuals and princes; for if you bear the past in mind, you will the better take counsel concerning the future. 36. Consider it a shameful thing that, while some private men are willing to die, that by their end they may win praise, kings should not have the courage to pursue those habits by which they will obtain good repute while living. Prefer that the statues you leave behind should be a memorial of your virtue rather than of your person.

If possible, try to preserve safety both for yourself and for the state; but if you should be compelled to run risk, choose rather to die with honour than to live in disgrace. 37. In all your deeds remember your kingly office, and take care to do nothing unworthy of that honour. Do not suffer your whole being to perish together, but, since you have a mortal body, endeavour to leave behind an immortal memory of your soul. 38. Practise speaking of good habits of conduct, that you may become used to have thoughts like your words. Whatever, after deliberation, you think best, execute in action. Imitate the actions of those whose reputations you envy. Whatever counsel you would give your own children, determine to abide by yourself. 39. Make use of what I have said or seek for something better. Consider wise not those who dispute minutely about trifles, but those who speak well on great subjects; not those who promise happiness to others while they themselves are in great difficulties, but those who speak moderately of themselves, while able to mix with affairs and men, and are not discomposed in the changes of life, but know how to bear both reverses and successes well and moderately.

40. And do not be surprised if much of what I say is as well known to you as to me; for it did not escape me, but I was well aware that, among the great multitude of

men, whether rulers or not, there are some who have partially expressed these precepts, others who have heard them, others who have seen other men following them, and others who themselves practise them. 41. But we must not in these discourses [about habits of life] look for novelty, for in them one may not say anything paradoxical or incredible or out of the common, but one must consider that writer to be most accomplished who can make the largest collection of the scattered thoughts of others, and set them forth in the best style. 42. It was also evident to me that, both in poems and in prose compositions, those which give counsel are considered by all men to be most useful, but yet they do not listen to them with the most pleasure, but feel as they do towards those who admonish them; for while they praise the latter, they prefer to associate with those who share their faults, rather than with those who try to turn them from them. 43. As an indication of this one might take the poetry of Hesiod¹ and Theognis² and Phocylides;³ for these, too, men say have proved the best counsellors for human life, but, while saying this, they prefer to spend their time over each other's follies rather than over the precepts of those poets. 44. Further, if one

¹ The earliest epic poet of Greece (after Homer) whose writings have been preserved. We possess (1) "The Works and Days," containing a number of precepts upon agriculture, navigation, household management, and the like, and specifying the days appropriate for each. (2) "The Theogony," an account of the origin of the world and the birth of the gods. (3) "The Shield of Heracles," an imitation of the Homeric account of the shield of Achilles, and most probably not written by Hesiod.

² A Greek elegiac poet (born about B.C. 540), belonging to a rich and noble family of Megara. He was a strong supporter of the aristocracy, and for his pronounced views was driven into banishment. Most of his poems (containing a great number of proverbs and precepts) have been lost.

³ A gnomic poet, or writer of moral maxims, in hexameter and elegiac verse, some few of which are extant. He was born at Miletus about the same time as Theognis at Megara.

were to pick out the so-called maxims of distinguished poets, to which they devoted their greatest efforts, people would take the same attitude towards them; for they would listen with greater pleasure to the most worthless comedy than to such skilful creations as these. 45. But why spend time in giving particular instances? for if we choose to take a general view of human nature, we shall find that most men do not take pleasure either in the most wholesome food, or in the noblest conduct, or in the best actions, or in the most useful creatures, but that in every respect their pleasures are opposed to their best interests, while those who do their duty in any way are thought men of ascetic and laborious lives; 46. how, then, could one please men of this sort by exhortation or instruction or any useful discourse, seeing that, in addition to what I have said, they envy men of wisdom and attribute guilelessness to those who have no understanding, and thus avoid the truth of things, so that they do not even understand their own affairs, but consider it a trouble to think about their private business while delighted to discuss the affairs of other people, and would prefer to suffer bodily sickness than to undergo mental labour and take thought about anything needful? 47. You will find them in society either reviling or being reviled, and in solitude not taking counsel, but indulging in vain wishes. Now I am not speaking against all men, but only against those who are open to the imputations I have made. 48. Moreover, it is clear that those who wish either to compose or to write anything acceptable to the multitude must seek not for the most useful discourses, but for those most full of fables; for men delight to listen to such, just as they delight to look at games and contests. For this reason we may well admire both the works of Homer and of the first inventors of the tragic drama, because, with an insight into human nature, they have made full use of both these kinds of enjoyment

for their works; 49. for Homer told fables concerning the contests and battles of the demi-gods, and the tragedians reduced fables into the form of contests and actions, so that we should not only hear them but also see them. With such examples, then, before us, proof is afforded to those who desire to carry away the minds of their audience, that they must abstain from admonition and advice, and must only say such things as they see that crowds most delight in.

50. Now, I have pursued this subject because I think that it is your duty, as being not one of the multitude, but a king over many men, not to be of the same mind as the world, nor to judge serious things or wise men by the pleasure they give, but to test them in the light of useful actions, 51. especially since those who are engaged in philosophy, while differing as to mental training, some saying that it is by disputation, others by political discussion, others by other methods that their followers will become wiser, all agree in this, that the well-educated man must acquire the power of taking counsel from these respective sources. 52. You should therefore keep clear of disputed points, and test mankind on the footing of what is generally agreed, if possible, observing them when they are giving counsel in times of difficulty, or, if that cannot be done, when they are making general statements about affairs. Those who have no conception of what is required, reject (for it is plain that if a man is of no use himself he will not make another man wise either); 53. but those who have intelligence, and are able to see farther than other people, hold in estimation and honour, knowing that a good counsellor is the most useful and princely of all possessions. And consider that those make your reign most great who can most improve your understanding.

54. Now I have exhorted you to the extent of my knowledge, and I honour you by these means which I possess, and do you choose that others also, as I said at the beginning,

should bring you not the usual gifts, which you purchase at a far higher price from those who give them than you would in the market, but such gifts as even by the roughest usage without a single day's intermission you will never wear out, but will even make greater and more valuable.